

22 (Amended). A substantially vertical vessel having a vertical internal surface, and comprising:

an inlet at or adjacent a top portion of said vessel;

an outlet at or adjacent a bottom portion of said vessel; and

at least one substantially continuous annular protrusion connected to said vertical internal surface and in a substantially horizontal plane, and having a maximum spacing from said internal surface of between about 1-12 inches, said protrusion being substantially impervious and having a cross-section selected from the group consisting essentially of right, isosceles, or scalene triangular, arcuate, and rectangular, and wherein said substantially horizontal plane is a substantially hollow region of said vessel.

Add new claims 26 to ³²31, as follows:

-- 26. (New) A vessel as recited in claim 22 further comprising at least one screen assembly within said vessel, wherein said at least one protrusion being axially offset in said vessel from said screen assembly.--

-- 27. (New). A digester cooking vertical vessel comprising:

an inlet at or adjacent a top portion of said vessel for receiving a fibrous slurry;

a liquid separating device in the top portion of the vessel and coupled to receive said slurry from the inlet;

a plurality of screen assemblies arranged at least at first and second horizontal levels of said vessel;

a substantially vertical internal surface of the vessel between the first and second horizontal levels;

at least one substantially continuous annular protrusion connected to said vertical internal surface, said protrusion having a maximum spacing from said internal surface of between about 1-12 inches and having a cross-section selected from a group consisting essentially of right, isosceles, or scalene triangular, arcuate, and rectangular, and wherein said protrusion is substantially offset axially from the horizontal levels of the screen assemblies, and

an outlet at or adjacent a bottom portion of said vessel.--

-- 28. (New) A digester cooking vessel as in claim 27 wherein said protrusion is an annular ring at a third horizontal level between the first and second horizontal levels.--

-- 29. (New) A digester cooking vessel as in claim 27 wherein said protrusion has a substantially isosceles triangular cross-section with an apex angle between about 10-175°.--

-- 30. (New). A digester cooking vessel as in claim 27 further comprising a plurality of said protrusions, vertically spaced from each other between about 1-12 feet,

and each having a height of between about 1-3 feet, and each of said protrusions axially offset from said screen assemblies.--

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-- 31. (New). A digester cooking vessel as in claim 27 wherein said protrusion is arcuate in cross-section with a radius of curvature equal to or greater than its height.--

--32. (New) A digester cooking vessel as in claim 27 wherein said protrusion is substantially solid and nonporous.--
